

District of Columbia Public Schools Progress Report: 2007 - 2008 School Year

A Message from Mayor Adrian M. Fenty

Dear Members of the Washington, DC, Community,

There has never been a more exciting time for education in the District of Columbia. When I first took office as Mayor, I declared education to be the number-one priority of my Administration. This is as true today as it was 18 months ago.

Since assuming authority over the schools June 12, 2007, and hiring Michelle Rhee as Chancellor, we have begun to make great strides in reforming academics, facilities, and personnel. The following report highlights some of our key accomplishments during the past year.

Much work lies ahead, but I am confident that we have laid a solid foundation for the school system all of us know is possible. I want to thank all of you for your confidence and support. Together, we will have a DCPS that sets a positive example for the rest of the nation.

Sincerely,

Adrian M. Fenty

Mayor

A Message from Chancellor Michelle Rhee

To the DCPS Community:

Last summer, when I first saw the challenges our school system was facing, I knew that in order to provide the quality of education that is every student's right, a sea change would have to occur. During the past school year, that transformation has begun. This first-year report shows the beginning of the reform DCPS will see in the coming years. Our task this year was to begin to build the strong foundation upon which all District children can receive a world-class public education. This foundation must support schools, parents, and the community in challenging our students to build stronger skills and attain the highest levels of achievement.

We know that this is possible. The recently-released DC-CAS test scores offer initial, but powerful evidence — and these tests are just a single indicator of our students' potential: Only one year into significant school reform, District



of Columbia Public Schools students show clear gains across the board, and our low-income, minority students show the greatest gains of all. Last year, 52 schools increased their scores in both reading and mathematics; this year, 99 schools did so. Of the 19 schools that doubled and tripled their proficiency rates, 14 are in Wards 7 and 8. Our African American and Hispanic students increased their proficiency in reading and in mathematics, closing the achievement gap between Black and Caucasian students by 6 points in reading and 5 points in mathematics, and between Hispanic and Caucasian students by 5 points in reading and 7 in mathematics.

I am proud of the efforts of students, teachers, principals, and parents that make student achievement possible, just as I am proud of the other accomplishments that these pages reveal. I am grateful for your efforts to embrace this significant and collective task together, and I look forward to achieving our goals for students in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Michelle Rhee Chancellor

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Introduction

In 2007, in partnership with the City Council, Mayor Adrian M. Fenty took mayoral control of the failing District of Columbia Public Schools. In June 2007, he appointed Michelle Rhee Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). This event signaled the start of a systematic reform process to transform DCPS from one of the lowest achieving school systems in the United States to a world-class example of public education.

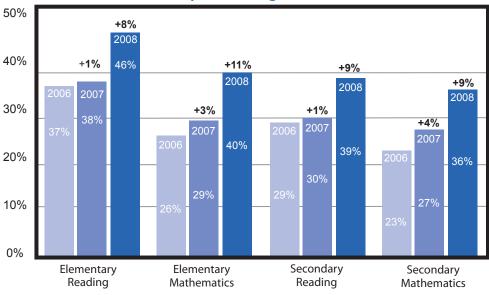
The inherited system was at a critical point, failing students and their families. Things needed to change.

Significant change did occur during the 2007–2008 school year. Drastic and difficult decisions were made in order to improve education for all students. To this end, there have been changes in leadership, facilities, infrastructure, community relations, and student support. And these changes have begun to yield measurable results.

Test Scores Indicate Student Performance Rising during Initial Reform Year

The DCPS reform momentum was confirmed with the July 2008 release of District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System (DC-CAS) scores: The DC CAS was administered to 97% of students in tested grade levels that includes 47% of K–12 students in DCPS. Within that group, almost 800 more are reading at grade level than were last year, and almost 1,400 more students are on grade level in mathematics than there were in the last school year.

Proficiency in Reading and Mathematics



- Elementary schools increased their reading scores by 8 percentage points and mathematics scores by 11 points.
- Secondary schools made 9 percentage point gains in both reading and mathematics.

This year's DC-CAS scores cut the number of schools with proficiency rates below 20% almost in half, moving from 50 to 29. Some of these schools doubled or tripled their average reading and mathematics scores: of the 19 schools that did so, 14 are in the city's neediest neighborhoods. Ten more schools met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) than last year, bringing the total of schools meeting AYP to 42.

Achievement test results also revealed increasing equality for students across the district. The achievement gap between Black and Caucasian students decreased by 6 points in reading and 5 points in mathematics. The academic growth among Black students outpaced the growth of Caucasian students by 30% in reading and 50% in mathematics. The gap between Hispanic and Caucasian students decreased by 5 points in reading and 7 points in mathematics.

These first-year test results show clearly that DCPS students can achieve when the important work of their teachers, principals, and parents is focused on that achievement. These results also provide strong evidence that the DCPS reform activities are making an impact.

"After only one year, this administration has made enormous headway in setting the stage for providing an excellent education for our children. We have a long way to go and will continue to put the weight of the entire city government behind this critical mission."

Mayor Adrian Fenty June 12, 2008

Reform Efforts Touch Every Aspect of DCPS

This annual progress report describes DCPS reform activities accomplished during the 2007–2008 school year. Among these accomplishments, two important changes in the way DCPS operates involve information technology and building infrastructure and management.

Information Technology

In September 2007 Mayor Fenty wasted no time to ensure that DCPS had the necessary expertise to oversee technological operation. He delegated management of DCPS Information Technology to the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO), under the direction of CTO Vivek Kundra. This new structure provided DCPS with the technological vision, expertise, and support it needs to remain focused on the ultimate responsibility of education and student achievement.

To assure proper and efficient use of DCPS Information Technology investments, an IT Investment Board was established. Comprised of key DCPS business and OCTO technology executives, this board monitors district IT infrastructure and acts as fiduciary for all IT-related investments.

OCTO ensured 6,300 new computers arrived at schools for the beginning of the 2007–2008 school year with the goal of a computer in every classroom. OCTO also received \$20 million in E-rate funding that will, in part, improve current district technology. Additional OCTO accomplishments are included throughout this report.

Buildings and Facilities

In response to the many DCPS facilities in poor repair, Mayor Fenty named Allen Lew to direct the new Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization (OPE-FM). OPEFM undertook an unprecedented \$500M in school construction, capital improvements, modernizations, and/or maintenance projects. In addition, in just one year's time, OPEFM has addressed more than 20,000 backlogged work orders—touching every school and facility. By the end of summer 2008 there will be few, if any, backlogged work orders. Additional OPEFM accomplishments are included throughout in this report.

Funding and Finance

A primary financial achievement was DCPS's ability to secure an increase in the federal payment for the 2007–2008 school year. This year's \$15 million federal payment will increase to \$38 million for the 2008–2009 school year. This additional \$23 million reflects a clear endorsement of the need for drastic school reform in the District, as well as faith in this administration's ability to achieve this goal.

For the 2009 fiscal year, the total DCPS budget includes \$773 million for the school system. With 23 schools closed at the beginning of the 2008–2009 school year, monies allocated for schools increased to \$537 million from \$493 million in FY '08. This overall increase signals the administration's commitment to allocating more funds to classrooms and to using resources in ways that directly affect student achievement.

This Progress Report

This first annual progress report presents a review of decisions, actions, and outcomes for the 2007–2008 school year. This evidence of progress is organized around the following five strategic categories and the goal of each:

- 1. **People**—Recruit and retain the most highly effective and highly compensated educators in the country. Provide these individuals with the support they need to perform their duties successfully.
- **2. Schools**—Create school programs that engage students and are compelling to families.
- **3. Academic Curriculum**—Implement a rigorous, relevant, college preparatory curriculum that gives all students meaningful options for life.
- **4. Data and Central Operations**—Bring accurate data to the fingertips of principals, teachers, students, and parents to inform learning as well as strategic planning.
- **5. Parent and Community Engagement**—Partner with parents and community members to improve our communities and schools, and together support the achievement of DC's children.

The annual progress report is written for the DCPS community and stakeholders to detail progress in the reform of DC public education. But overall, this report documents the path to realizing DCPS's ultimate purpose: increased opportunities for the children of Washington, DC, through effective education.

"Over the past year the district has demonstrated that it's ready for change. Parents, teachers, community members, and most importantly, students have worked hand-in-hand with this administration to introduce a new culture of accountability and results. There is no doubt in my mind that we're on our way to creating a world-class education system."



1. People

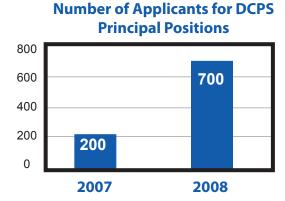
Goal: Retain the most highly effective and highly compensated educators in the country. Provide these individuals with the support they need to perform their duties successfully.

DCPS is building a system that identifies, hires, develops, and rewards passionate, talented, and effective people—including teachers, principals, administrators, staff, and members of the central office staff. Every school employee is expected to contribute to student achievement by performing his or her duties competently and with accountability.

The following actions with regard to **People** supported student achievement during the 2007–2008 school year.

Quality Leadership Now, and into the Future

700 principal candidates recruited to serve DCPS students—an increase of 350% over previous year. In fall 2007, the Office of Human Resources launched an aggressive national principal search. These continuing efforts will ensure that DCPS has the right school leaders in the right place. Forty-six schools will have new leaders in the 2008–2009 school year.



- Federal funds directed to creation of School Leadership Institute. The
 institute will provide principals and teachers with comprehensive support
 and guidance, and will create a pipeline of emerging leaders to fulfill DCPS's
 future needs.
- New professional development specialists in every school in the 2008–2009 school year. 118 literacy professional developers and 57 mathematics professional developers were recruited and hired to provide embedded professional development to teachers with the goal of increasing students' literacy and mathematics skills district-wide.

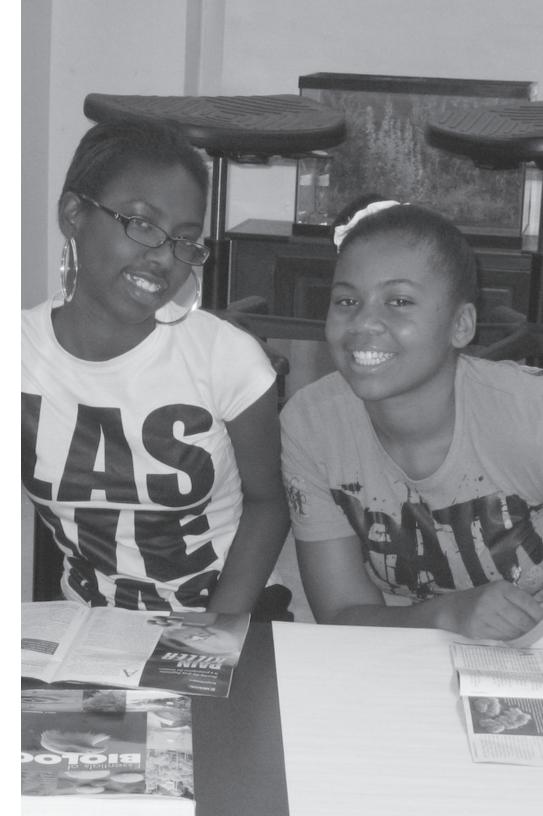
- Student achievement rewarded at Barnard, Noyes, and Tyler Elementary Schools with a total of \$600,000 to all staff (principals to custodians).
 Each of these schools improved student test scores by 20% or more in both reading and mathematics in a single year.
- Strong cohort of DC high school, undergraduate, and graduate student
 interns worked toward DCPS student achievement. Applying from
 universities across the country, 74 graduate and undergraduate students
 from Harvard, MIT, Stanford, Duke, University of Michigan, and 33 other
 schools were selected to play active roles alongside DCPS high school
 interns. Together these interns work on all aspects of DC school reform.

Strategic Staffing

- 1.2 million personnel documents discovered, scanned, and preserved.
 With OCTO's help, DCPS scanned and archived important personnel documents in just 54 days. For the first time, the Office of Human Resources began to reengineer manual, paper-based business processes toward end-to-end digital record-keeping.
- Comprehensive employee audit documented school and subject assignments and teaching credentials for all teachers for the first time in recent history. Verified school location, subjects taught, and certification status of all DCPS teachers.
- First consistent performance review process in two decades created for all Central Office staff and implemented by the Office of Human Resources.
- Nonunion DCPS Central Office employees converted to at-will status, increasing overall accountability and efficiency, and the potential to direct more funds to classrooms.
- Teachers offered transition opportunities. Washington Teachers' Union members eligible for retirement, as well as those in closing or restructuring schools, were offered additional options.

Rapid and Thorough Attention to Customer Service

The Chancellor's Critical Response Team—created to handle requests and concerns of the DCPS community quickly and effectively—responded to 7,038 requests during the 2007–2008 school year. 92% were answered in the first 24 hours and have ultimately been resolved.



2. Schools

Goal: Create school programs that engage students and are compelling to families.

Academic success requires access to physical resources effectively targeted to community and student needs. Every DCPS school is taking on change with one goal in mind: to ensure that students have the necessary structure and support to learn and achieve. Optimizing school sites to match the needs of the community and nourishing the mind and body are two of many areas where change has occurred.

During the 2007–2008 school year, the following actions strengthened **Schools**.

Schools that Better Serve All Students

- Phelps Architecture, Construction, and Engineering High School reopens for the 2008-2009 school year. Phelps will now offer a comprehensive high school experience and specialized instructional opportunities in the architecture, construction, and engineering industries.
- 15 new early childhood classes will open for 2008–2009 school year.
 Plans made in 2007–2008 will result in places for 220 more three- and four-year olds in the coming year:
 - 6 Special Education classes at Tubman Elementary School and Prospect Learning Center
 - 10 Pre-Kindergarten classes at LaSalle, West, Truesdell, Miner, J. O. Wilson, Aiton, Patterson, Thomas, and Garfield Elementary Schools, as well as a Reggio Emilia preschool class at Montgomery Elementary School
- Blackman Jones Alternative Dispute Resolution Agreement ensured enhanced services for students with disabilities. DCPS, in conjunction with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, reached agreement on key projects that will increase funding for greater mental health and educational services.

 26 schools undertake restructuring. Created and announced specific plans for the schools that, under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, will be restructured:

Senior High Schools: Anacostia, Ballou, Cardozo, Coolidge, Dunbar, Eastern, Roosevelt, Spingarn, Wilson, and Woodson

Middle Schools: Browne, Eliot, Garnet-Patterson, Hart, Johnson, Kramer, Lincoln, MacFarland, Ron Brown, Shaw, and Sousa

Elementary Schools: Miner, Moten, Stanton, Truesdell, and Webb-Wheatley

- 23 school programs closed to ensure that every student in the system has access to art, music, physical education, library services, and more.
 As part of DCPS's unprecedented reform, these school programs closed at the end of the 2007–2008 school year.
- Made plans for 2008–2009 launch of Full Service School Model in 8 middle schools. Full Service Schools address the academic and behavioral needs of all students, while offering additional individualized support to students in need of intense behavioral and/or mental health services. A particular focus of this model is family engagement and strength-based student assessments and treatment plans. The eight Full Service Schools for 2008–2009: Eliot-Hine, Hart, Johnson, Kelly Miller, Kramer, Ron Brown, Shaw-Garnet-Patterson, and Sousa.

Better Food for Students' Bodies and Brains

- New food service piloted at four schools (Garrison, C. W. Harris, Woodson, and Cardozo) resulted in healthier meals and increased sales. This pilot demonstrated a clear indication of student preference for healthy food.
- District-wide new food service begins with 2008–2009 school year.

 Planned and executed in the 2007–2008 school year, school food service will be outsourced. This will benefit DCPS operationally and financially and will make healthful meals available to students, teachers, and school staff.

Effective, Well-Maintained School Buildings

6,300 new computers for teachers and administrators.

103 schools connected to high-speed broadband.

\$20M in E-rate funding used to upgrade technology investments.

- Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization invested \$500 million in school construction, capital improvements, modernizations, and/or maintenance projects. Mayoral governance made possible this unprecedented investment. Work in 20 schools is either in design, under construction, or has been completed.
- Completed more than 20,000 backlogged work **orders.** In one year, with contractors and in-house trade staff, OPEFM has touched each school with necessary quality of life improvements.
- Fixed more than 400 boilers, installed 2,500 window air-conditioner units resulting in air-conditioning in every classroom, and made repairs to most central cooling systems. Working climate control systems contribute to environments that are both comfortable and conducive to learning.

Safe and Secure Schools

- Overhauled the entry and exit systems at 11 priority schools. New door installations—which improve security for students and staff and end fire code violations—were completed at Johnson Middle School and Anacostia, Ballou, Banneker, Cardozo, Coolidge, Dunbar, Duke Ellington, Roosevelt, Spingarn, and Wilson High Schools.
- New, collaborative school monitoring effort begun between school leadership and the Metropolitan Police Department. Secondary schools identified as requiring proactive monitoring, discipline, and security support are now equipped with two-way radios that improve communications between administrations and security teams in and around school buildings.
- Metropolitan Police Department provided plans and action to get students to and from school safely. The Safe Passage program worked to ensure that all students, particularly those who will be attending new schools in 2008–2009, have safe routes to and from school.

Safety and Security Committees at 111 schools collaborated for the first time to address school-specific safety concerns. Staff from central office, teachers, parents, students, security guards, and the Metropolitan Police Department joined with schools to ensure that students attend safe schools that allow them to focus on learning.

Learning Enhanced through New Technologies

- 6,300 new computers for teachers and administrators. In six weeks, deployed over 6,300 computers for teachers and administrators to tap into the power of technology to improve the quality of classroom education.
- 103 schools connected to high-speed broadband network. Efforts increased Internet speed in the schools 50 times over, from speeds of 1.5 megabits per second (mbps) to as much as 100 mbps. Remaining schools will be on the network by the beginning of the 2008–2009 school year.
- \$20M in Federal E-Rate funding enabled key technology investments. \$13.8 million was used for current maintenance and upgrade initiatives, and \$6.3 million was applied toward outstanding debt, dating back to 2003.
- Read 180 and Accelerated Math intervention programs provided students with online teaching and learning tools to improve reading and mathematics skills.
- DIBELS wireless handhelds allowed teachers to assess kindergarteners' literacy skills accurately and quickly. Used in 66 schools, teachers were able to teach immediately to the specific need of each student.

During the 2007-2008 school year:

- More than 400 boilers were fixed and 2,500 air-conditioner units were installed.
- Over 20,000 backlogged work orders were fixed and closed.





3. Academic Curriculum

Goal: Implement a rigorous, relevant, college preparatory curriculum that gives all students meaningful options for life.

Each student must build the basic skills that form the foundation for a productive life, as well as be challenged to achieve to his or her full potential. To this end, DCPS is aligning curriculum, instructional materials and approach, use of data, and teacher professional development toward these common educational goals.

The following actions taken during the 2007–2008 school year strengthened the **Academic Curriculum** and student achievement; DC-CAS test scores confirmed their impact.

Improving Performance for Teachers and Students

- Student performance below grade level addressed through directed assessment and intervention. Identified areas of student weakness and created teacher professional development modules concentrated in these areas so that instruction could improve and, in turn, student performance could increase.
- Pacing guides and other advanced teaching tools developed and implemented so that teachers can better monitor the pace at which they are teaching. Ensures that all content is covered and students have a complete learning experience.
- 2,500 elementary students in grades 3–6 became Saturday Scholars.
 They attended 13 weeks of literacy and mathematics classes on Saturday mornings in extra preparation for DC-CAS tests.
- **20%—or 2,100 more students—took the PSAT.** 71% of grades 9–11 students took the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) in Fall 2007, an increase over 51% during the 2006–2007 school year.
- Summer school expanded to 37 schools, including 12 high schools.
 In addition to being available at 21 elementary schools (Aiton, Bancroft, Barnard, Brightwood, Burroughs, Cleveland, Ferebee Hope, Garrison, J. O.

Wilson, Ketcham, Ludlow-Taylor, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Marie Reed, Miner, Nalle, Noyes, Patterson, Randle Highlands, River Terrace, and Tyler) and four middle schools (Johnson, Kelly Miller, Lincoln, and Shaw), the new five-week program was expanded to 12 high schools (Anacostia, Ballou, Banneker, Bell, Cardozo, Coolidge, Dunbar, Eastern, McKinley, School without Walls, Spingarn, and Wilson), a significant increase from only three high school sites during the 2006–2007 school year.

Schools at all levels realize gains on the DC-CAS:

Elementry schools increase reading scores by 8 points and mathematics scores by 11 points.

Secondary schools increase reading and mathematics by 9 points.

DC-CAS Test Scores Confirm School Reform Impact

- Schools at all levels in the system realize gains.
 Elementary schools increased their reading scores
 by 8 percentage points and mathematics proficiency
 by 11 percentage points. Secondary schools made
 9 percentage point gains in both reading and mathematics.
- 10 more schools met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) than last year, bringing the total number of schools meeting AYP up to 42.
- 21 less schools with low proficiency rates. The number of schools with proficiency rates below 20% has been almost cut in half, from 50 to 29. 19 of these schools doubled or tripled their average reading and mathematics scores; 14 of those 19 schools are in Wards 7 and 8.
- **High-performing students increase performance markedly.** As students move their scores toward and past the proficiency level, the system must challenge students to move into the advanced levels. This year 15 schools increased, by 5% or more, the number of students reaching the advanced level in reading; 18 schools increase, by 10% or more, the number of students reaching the advanced level in mathematics.

4. Data and Central Operations

Goal: Bring accurate data to the fingertips of principals, teachers, students, and parents to inform learning as well as strategic planning.

Consistent and accurate data on students, teachers, and the system's organizational performance are essential ingredients for enhancing student achievement and in creating a well-run school system. DCPS has begun to create a data-driven culture supported by dramatically upgraded data collection and analysis. Decisions of all kinds—from individual student advising to organization-wide initiatives—are informed by these data. Facts about student achievement, for example, drive decisions about where to put resources and how to manage staff. The result is better decisions and performance across the board.

Action steps taken during the 2007–2008 school year established a foundation for effective and efficient **Central Operations** driven by **Data-Based Decision Making.**

Data Systems to Support Strong Schools and Student Learning

- Highly qualified teachers identified and parents notified. For the first time, DCPS complied with this No Child Left Behind mandate. Parents and guardians were informed of the credentials and quality of their children's teachers.
- Launched online tool that enables parents to quickly learn the licensure of their children's teachers and whether those teachers are highly qualified.
- Audit of previously neglected transcripts found that nearly one-third of DCPS high school students were in jeopardy of not graduating because they were either missing core classes, enrolled in the wrong class, or had not been credited with earned units. The audit, a service provided pro bono by Accenture, increased summer school classes and made other systemic changes in order to immediately address this critical problem.

- Increased attendance data entry into DC STARS, from 59% and 57% in January to 85% and 95% in May at two pilot schools. Baseline tracking student attendance allows DCPS to monitor efforts in combating truancy.
- Summer school attendance data successfully integrated into DC STARS so that, for the first time, DC STARS can track summer school attendance and get a more comprehensive view of student progress.
- Partnered with Harvard University to study patterns related to students who drop out of school. This on-going project will expose early indicators that will help us work more successfully with at-risk students.

Greater Business Efficiency and Effectiveness

- 18% more purchase orders prepared under tighter timelines. By shortening due dates, the Office of Contracts and Acquisitions increased completion of purchase orders from 71% in January to 89% in April.
- New systems track employee status. For the first time, DCPS could monitor the number and location of employees in the school system.

- 97% of all textbook orders completed by the start of the 2007–2008 school year. Just months after gaining control of DCPS, the administration reorganized the central warehouse and successfully opened schools, a task that had not been executed well in past years.
- 99% of new teachers were paid on time. For the first time, timely pay warrants were issued to newly recruited teachers.
- Processing for Blackman Jones initiative improved by electronic docketing. The new system manages and tracks the administrative complaint process and new special education data for DCPS and local education agencies.
- Web 2.0 products improved workflow and analysis for the Offices of Human Resources, Special Education, Data and Accountability, and the Chief Financial Officer.
- Saved \$443K by optimizing IT-related contracts, allowing these funds to be redirected to classrooms. Renegotiated, consolidated, or eliminated existing contracts to save \$443K in Anti-Virus software (\$146K), Voice Over IP phone support (\$217K), and Nutrition Software (\$80K).



5. Parent and Community Engagement

Goal: Partner with parents and community members to improve our communities and schools, and together support the achievement of DC's children.

During the 2007-2008 school year, Chancellor Rhee:

Met with 370 constituent groups that included Parents, PTA, Principals, Teachers and Staff, Students, and Community Members.

Received and responded to 95,000 emails.

Parents, students, and other community members all play roles in increasing student achievement. Research has proven this relationship and has established parental involvement as the single most significant predictor of academic success. Reflecting these truths, DCPS continues to enhance its efforts to communicate with important stakeholders and to engage them in making schools successful.

During the 2007–2008 school year, DCPS took the following actions to support and expand **Parent and Community Engagement.**

Strengthening the Role and Visibility of Parents

3 Parent Resource Centers opened in Wards 1,
 7, and 8. The centers serve as one-stop shops for parents in search of tools and information to help them and their students.

Connecting with Community to Improve Schools

- More than 200 community and school meetings took place across the
 city—Approximately 150 focused on matters related to school
 closings alone. Others were gatherings where community members, teachers, school leaders, and DCPS staff met to discuss other issues such
 as budget, restructuring, and reuse.
- Audit revealed 800 partners working with DC schools in nearly 1,200 school partnership programs. Partners included businesses and nonprofits, civic associations, foundations, government agencies, the armed forces, colleges and universities, fraternities and sororities, parent groups, service organizations, sports franchises, and trade associations.

- 117 businesses volunteered labor, time, supplies, and equipment to "buff and scrub" 54 schools. Volunteers erased graffiti, repaired light and bathroom fixtures, and painted school walls so that school communities would be brighter, cleaner, and in better repair.
- 1,600 volunteers across all eight wards participated in Citywide
 Beautification Day. The most successful citywide school clean-up day
 since they began in 2005, volunteers successfully "spruced up" schools
 to make them better fit for learning.

The Chancellor Connects

- Chancellor Rhee met with 370 groups of constituents during the 2007– 2008 school year. Students, parents, teachers, school staff, principals, and other community members comprised these groups.
- Chancellor Rhee received and responded to 95,000 emails during the 2007–2008 school year. Exclusive of emails to Ask The Chancellor on the DCPS website, the Chancellor received and responded to 95,000 emails on her personal email account. The vast majority of these were from DCPS stakeholders.



Continuing the Momentum

To the DCPS Community,

I am proud as I look back upon this year and the accomplishments that the hard work of so many has yielded. However, it is most important that we reflect on and assess the past year in order to improve and to move forward into a larger plan for achievement.

In the near future, we will begin to discuss—as a school system and as a community—a five-year implementation plan built on the foundation of the Master Education Plan (MEP) and on the work that we have begun this year. A comprehensive implementation of the MEP will challenge all of us to reform each interdependent area of the system. For years, we have seen how failure in one part of the system can impair another. For example, flawed data and business systems led to a failure, regularly and accurately, to pay teachers in an accurate and timely way, which has made it very hard to retain quality teachers. We have begun to reverse this process and will continue that reversal over the next five years, making each part of DCPS stronger than ever before. Throughout this work, my end focus will remain constant: bringing all of our resources to bear on student achievement, ensuring that every child in every school gets an excellent education.

During the 2008–2009 school year, we will take further steps toward a DCPS that our children deserve. As we are doing this year, we will report back to you. We will continue to work toward a school system in which:

- students are challenged by a curriculum that holds them to high expectations for success;
- teachers resolutely focus on student achievement, and they will be rewarded for creating this achievement in their classrooms;
- principals both lead and support all parts of their school communities to student success;
- parents are empowered as change agents with high expectations of this system that push us toward continuous improvement.

I am confident and hopeful as I look forward to DCPS 2008–2009. I count on your continued commitment to our students as we move forward toward higher levels of achievement.

Sincerely

Mille-

Michelle Rhee Chancellor



